

# CHAPTER XXI

## PROBABLE DIVERSIONS DURING SUBSEQUENT EPOCHS

1. **Diversions: inevitable events on mountain roads.**
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3. **The “milestone” place names indicate the course of alternative routes.**
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### 1 - Diversions: inevitable events on mountain roads.

The transapennine road certainly had to suffer its share of the consequences of natural events that often upset road routes to varying degrees. Although it is true that ridge roads were exposed to fewer risks (for example, they were less likely to be exposed to flash floods), they were often affected by landslides and rock falls which could force either a temporary or permanent route change.

If the interruption was modest, just a straightforward repair was enough to ensure continuity, but if its proportions were large, a permanent detour was sometimes necessary.

This also happened to the Roman road, as we noted by observing the morphology of the area it traversed. In fact, we came across locations where massive devastation had dragged the road downhill, considerably modifying an entire versant (as occurred between Passetegere and mount Poggiaccio and on the slopes of Poggione above S. Lucia). In other cases, modest subsidence

had simply lowered the paving, leaving it almost intact (as noted in Poggio Castelluccio - site D/3), or disrupted the paving for just 10-15 metres (later repaired, as on Poggione - site G/4).

It is easy to realise just how many natural events have affected such an ancient road over the course of the centuries, forcing local diversions or alternative routes and substantially changing the original route.

### 2 - The influence of changed security conditions and new settlements along alternative routes.

Changing political-military situations and new settlements in the area altered the original route.

It cannot be overlooked that C. Flaminius started to build the road at the end of victorious battles against the Ligurians, who had not yet been completely defeated. They still held the Apennine territories in the provinces of Reggio Emilia, Parma and La Spezia, as well as the whole of Liguria<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The wars against the Ligurians continued for over another 20 years. Reminder: in 186 B.C. Quintus Marcius fought against the Apuani Ligurians on their ground (Livy, book XXXIX, paragraph 20); in 185 B.C. M. Sempronius Tuditanus attacked the Apuani Ligurians (Livy, book XXXIX paragraph 32: “*Sempronius set off from Pisa against the Ligurian Apuani, by devastating and burning their fortresses, he opened a passage as far as the river Macra and the port of Luni*”). And again in 183 B.C., Quintus Fabius Labeo sent reports to Rome outlining that there was a danger that the Apuani may invade Pisa (Livy, book XL, paragraph 1). In 180 B.C., the consul, A. Postumius fought against the Ligurians in Parma and Quintus Fulvius in Liguria (Livy, book XL, paragraph 41).

Therefore, there was a potential risk of incursions into the stretch of Apennines that had just been freed. A road that ran along the entire ridge from Fiesole to Bologna was essential to keep the area under military control. However, once these tenacious enemies were finally defeated and the whole of Italy was securely occupied and colonised, the military security required by the demands of war was no longer necessary and the ridge road lost its essential nature. Nevertheless, the particularly safe, convenient and rapid route along the ridge continued to be used and maintained until new situations forced the creation of alternative routes, which were more suited to traffic.

However, one must not think that the colonisation of the countryside around Bologna ended with the dispatch of three-thousand coloni. Once peace was brought to every province (*et quia a bello quieta ut esset provincia effecerat*),<sup>2</sup> numerous other coloni took possession of the land taken from the Gauls, settling in the most fertile and comfortable areas.

It is very likely that colonial and artisan settlements were established further south in the foothills and the valleys of the Reno and Savena especially, which benefited from the precious and abundant water supply of the two rivers, as well as other centuriated areas on the plains. Roads were created with the new settlements to guarantee communication with cities. As far as the Savena valley was concerned, from Bologna to Pianoro and as far as Brento, a new important road artery (which passed through Paderno and Pieve del Pino) was created as an alternative to the one along the parallel ridge, whose maintenance may have become problematic due to the formation of erosion furrows. A corresponding alternative to the original route perhaps developed over a longer period of time on the Tuscan versant, from its roadhead on the right bank of the Arno, near Ponte Vecchio. New settlements probably developed around this important trade junction as of 187 B.C., encouraged by an efficient road system and waterways that reached the sea. The settlements extended along the course

of the Arno, as well as on the right bank and towards Prato; areas that had been completely liberated from the regular incursions by the Ligurian Apuani.

The continuation of the Via Cassia from Fiesole to Pisa through Prato, Pistoia and Lucca, which took place during the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>3</sup>, may have further encouraged the proliferation of settlements west of Fiesole, along the Bisenzio and Marina valleys.

Florence, founded during the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., then began to assume the strategic importance enjoyed until then by Fiesole.

After these events, which developed between 187 B.C. to the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., a new road axis was probably developed towards the Apennines which exploited an initial stretch of the Via Cassia towards Prato and then turned right and, in Calenzano, entered the Val Marina heading decidedly northwards. This road then became an alternative route to the initial Tuscan stretch of C. Flaminius' transapennine road. Therefore, by the start of the imperial age, there were already two alternative routes to the initial tracts of C. Flaminius' transapennine road, which ascended from Bologna and Florence towards the Futa pass.

Furthermore, we are convinced that during the same epoch, the now consolidated conditions of military safety and a number of large landslides induced the Romans to change the most mountainous stretch of the route avoiding the ascent to mount Bastione, Poggiaccio and Poggio Castelluccio. They very probably opened a road that from the altitude of 800 metres above sea level of the present-day Madonna dei Fornelli, reached the Futa pass (altitude: 903 above sea level) coasting the south-west slopes of the mountains.

### 3 - The “milestone” place names indicate the course of alternative routes.

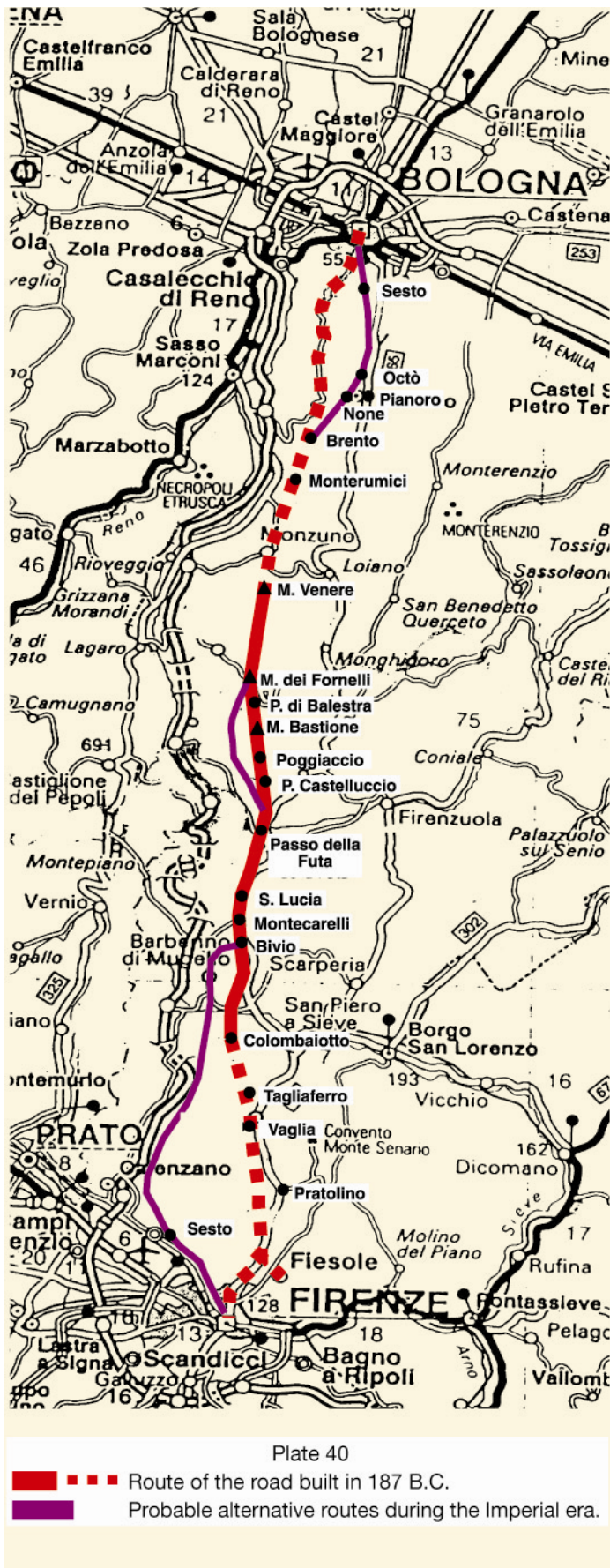
When in 1977 we decided to look for the road, the opinions of historians were based on two different supposed routes:

- almost all<sup>4</sup> agreed that the axis used was the one that linked Bologna to Fiesole through the

<sup>2</sup> T. Livius: work cited, book XXXIX, paragraph 2.

<sup>3</sup> The Via Cassia was continued from Fiesole to Pisa from 150 to 123 B.C. thanks to the initiative of the consul Titus Quintius Flaminius.

<sup>4</sup> We are referring to the opinion of those who have identified the Roman road either entirely or in part: Ludovico Savioli, Serafino Calindri, Arturo Palmieri, Daniele Sterpos, Giovanni Uggeri, etc.



Futa pass. However, because their theories regarding the initial stretches of the transapennine road are based on the place names that originate from milestones, they attributed the paternity of the itinerary that entered the Savena valley from the north<sup>5</sup> and the Val Marina from the south<sup>6</sup> to C. Flaminius. They cannot be blamed for believing this, because according to the archaeological knowledge of the time, this was clearly the most well founded hypothesis;

- the other theory, which was absolutely new compared to the most commonly held opinion of historians, was the one upheld by Nereo Alfieri, whereby Flaminius' road ran along the ridge which acts as a watershed between the Idice and the Sillaro.

The discoveries described and documented in this volume categorically exclude the second theory and adjust the first: the stretches of road confirmed by "miliari" [milestone] place names are simply later alternatives. However, if one avoids falling into the trap of attributing them to the road built by the consul, C. Flaminius, these stretches of road are very important. They indicate a Roman route created during subsequent centuries, preferred by the people who later settled in the Savena valley to the north, and the Arno and Marina valleys to the south.

This order of events surrounding the creation of the two alternative routes through the foothills is based on pure logic.

In fact, just as today there are continuous residential and industrial settlements from Bologna to Pianoro and there are none along the ridge from Paderno to Pieve del Pino. The same must have occurred two thousand years ago. It is obvious that initially there must have been a road from Pianoro to Bologna, then

<sup>5</sup> Daniele Sterpos: "Comunicazioni stradali attraverso i tempi: Bologna - Firenze" Istituto Geografico De Agostini, Novara 1961, page 11: "There appears to be evidence of the two final stretches of the ancient route. In fact, at a respective distance of six and eight Roman miles from Bologna, there are two place names, Sesto and Octò which obviously originate from milestones along a route".

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Uggeri: work cited, page 589: "The next stretch of the road corresponded to the same route as the modern artery, conditioned by the conformation of the landscape. After rounding the foot of the Cementerie, it must have crossed the Chiosina near the "autostrada del Sole" [A1 motorway]. It flanked the route of the motorway until it ascended Colle (altitude: 120 metres - probably to avoid going round Colle between S. Donato and Calenzano) and in Madonna del Facchino the route reached the left flank of Val di Marina".



a link must have been created between Pianoro and Brento to reach the transapennine ridge towards Tuscany. This new and increasingly popular route was preferred because it was built on more stable ground: It has replaced the initial stretch along the ridge and is the alternative route handed down to posterity through the milestone place names.

It is reasonable to suppose that the alternative route in Val Marina also underwent a similar evolution.

On the Tuscan versant, the chronology of historic events adds considerable support to this new theory. It is very probable that the colonial settlements founded where lasting peace had been established proliferated in the valley of the Arno, Bisenzio and Marina, rather than on the Mugello mountains. Thus, the population of Fiesole, Prato and Calenzano must have progressively increased along with artisan activities, especially after the Via Cassia was extended from Fiesole to Prato, Pistoia and onwards as far as Luca and Pisa during the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. The foundation of Florence during the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. also substantially confirms this proliferation of settlements. This event undoubtedly shifted economic interest and trade to the Arno, just as the former extension of the Via Cassia had shifted them towards Prato and Pistoia. It was only after these events that a new stretch of road was needed. The new road branched off the Via Cassia at Sesto Fiorentino<sup>7</sup>, entered the Val Marina and formed a link with the Futa Apennine pass.

#### **4 – Sallust's account about the circumstances of Catiline's defeat in Pistoia (62 B.C.) provides important information**

The creation of this diversion after the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. finds confirmation in a historic event which took place in 62 B.C. near

Pistoia, when Lucius Sergius Catiline lost his life.

The decisive moments are narrated by Sallust<sup>8</sup> who describes the movements of enemy armies on opposing versants of the Tuscany—Emilia Apennines, indirectly providing vital information for our research. After describing the plots woven by Catiline so that he could take power by cunning and force, Sallust underlines the contribution to Catiline's cause by Caius Manlius, sent to Fiesole and the surrounding area to recruit an army, (*Igitur C. Manlium Faesulas atque partem Etruriae... dimisit*) with the order to train the army and keep ready for war (... *docet se Manlium praemisisse ad eam multitudinem quam ad capiunda arma paraverat...*)

Northern Etruria, and especially Fiesole, was where Manlius' military forces organised themselves. This is confirmed in Sallust's account<sup>9</sup>: "... A few days later, the senator, Lucius Saenius, read a letter to the Senate, which, he said, had been sent to him from Fiesole; the letter stated that Caius Manlius had taken up arms with a large number of men... And because of this, by a decree of the Senate, Quintus Marcius Rex was dispatched to Fiesole".

If then, Fiesole was Catiline's base for setting up his military attack, it must be supposed that Fiesole was located in a strategic position, especially in view of a retreat into Cisalpine Gaul where his plot had numerous allies. Therefore, he knew that if necessary, he could use the Fiesole-Bologna transapennine road which was still in perfect condition.

However, the plot was discovered prematurely. Because Catiline could no longer rely on the surprise element of his scheme and because his position was weakened by numerous desertions, he realised that instead of attacking he had to defend himself from the reaction of the regular legions by attempting to retreat northwards with his army. He also realised that he could not hope to cross the Apennines unharmed by travelling along the most direct and convenient road (Fiesole-Bologna)

<sup>7</sup> Giovanni Uggeri: work cited, page 586: "*La diramazione delle due arterie doveva avvenire a Sesto, ossia sei miglia ad ovest di Firenze*".

<sup>8</sup> Sallust: "De coniuratione Catilinae", paragraph XXVII. Sallust was born in Amiternum in the autumn of 86 B.C. He lived through the episodes of Catiline's plot and was therefore able to collect first-hand accounts, describing events with precision. He wrote this work in 43-42 B.C.

<sup>9</sup> Sallust: work cited, paragraph XXX: "*Post paucos dies L. Saenius senator in senatu litteras recitavit, quas Faesulis adlatas sibi dicebat, in quibus scriptum erat C. Manlium arma cepisse cum magna multitudine... Igitur senati decreto Q. Marcius Rex Faesulas... ea loca missi*".

because it was probably policed by the enemy exactly for this reason. So he decided to attempt to reach the Po Valley along secondary routes over uneven ground, which was absolutely unsuitable for an army. These are Sallust's words<sup>10</sup>: "... *Catiline led the remainder by forced march over rugged ground towards Pistoia, with the intention of secretly escaping through byroads into Cisalpine Gaul...*"

Catiline's fear of meeting the enemy army on the more practical transapennine road was exact according to Sallust's account<sup>11</sup>: "... *But Quintus Metellus Celer was stationed in the Piceno with three legions; on reflecting about the difficulties of Catiline's position, Quintus Metellus Celer suspected his plan. When some deserters told him where he was heading, he immediately broke up camp and took position at the foot of the mountains Catiline would have to descend on his hurried march towards Gaul*".

Therefore, Q. Metellus Celere's regular legions drew up at the northern foot of the Apennines ready to face Catiline if he descended the better-known Fiesole-Bologna road. Instead, Catiline had already moved towards the mountains of Pistoia, where however, he found it incredibly difficult to cross the Apennines. In the meantime, Antonius' legions advanced from the south<sup>12</sup>:

"*Nor was Antonius very far off: he pursued the escaping enemy with the advantage of a large army which moved quickly over more even ground. When Catiline realised he was trapped between the mountains and enemy troops, knowing that the revolt in Rome had failed and that there was no hope of escape or aid... he decided to fight Antonius as soon as possible*".

These events are illuminating because they confirm that Catiline did not find an escape route across the Apennines over the mountains of Pistoia (or Prato). He was forced to descend towards the plain of the Arno, facing an open battle with Antonius during which he was killed.

It is obvious that if (as well as the Fiesole-Futa-Bologna road) another transapennine road existed across the Collina pass or towards Val Marina that could be used by an army; Catiline would have undoubtedly used it to escape Antonius' legions.

These conclusions are an important contribution towards solving another issue that has always puzzled the scholars of Roman roads. This is the famous sentence uttered by Cicero<sup>13</sup> about the three roads that linked Rome to Modena. One was the Via Flaminia which joined the Via Aemilia in Rimini; another was the Via Aurelia which, to tell the truth was completely off route, and anyway needlessly long. The third, the Cassia, Cicero rightly indicates as an intermediate road. This road already reached Pisa from Rome through Arezzo, Florence, Prato, Pistoia and Lucca. From Rome, it was undoubtedly the most direct towards Modena, but it was necessary to cross the Apennines to reach Modena.

Where? We are convinced that the Romans still used Flaminius' original route (also called Cassia at the time because it was a diversion that branched off from the Via Cassia) and Catiline's episode excludes any other alternative.

In 1984, before he learned of our discoveries, Giovanni Uggeri<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Sallust: work cited, paragraph LVII: "... *reliquos Catilina per montis asperos magnis itineraribus in agrum Pistoriensem abducit eo consilio uti per tramites occulte perfugeret in Galliam Transalpinam...*"

<sup>11</sup> Sallust: work cited, paragraph LVII: "*At Q. Metellus Celer cum tribus legionibus in agro Piceno praesidebat ex difficultate rerum eadem illa exsistumans, quae supra diximus, Catilinam agitare. Igitur ubi iter eius ex perfugis cognovit, castra propere movit ac sub ipsis radicibus montium consedit, qua illi descensus erat in Galliam properanti*".

<sup>12</sup> Sallust: work cited, paragraph LVII: "... *Neque tamen Antonius procul aberat, utpote qui magno exercitu loci aequioribus expeditus in fuga sequeretur. Sed Catilina, postquam videt montibus atque copiis hostium sese clausum, in urbe res adversas neque fugae, neque praesidi ulla spem... statuit cum Antonio quam primum conflagrare*".

<sup>13</sup> M. Tullius Cicero: Philippicae, XII, 9: "*Tres viae sunt ad Mutinam... A supero mari Flaminia, ab infero Aurelia, medio Cassia*". This quotation by Cicero refers to Catiline's age (considering he was born in 106 B.C.)

<sup>14</sup> Giovanni Uggeri: work cited, page 586: "*It must naturally be presumed that Florence did not exist (at least in terms of an urban settlement) when the Via Flaminia Minor (187 B.C.) was built: the road must have originally been at the foot of Fiesole and on the entire hill system facing the right bank of the Arno. However, during the imperial age, the new colony of Florence became so important that it developed into the main focus of the entire local road system, which was originally centred around Fiesole (upstream) and the ford across the Arno (downstream) where Ponte Vecchio now stands. This also means that the route of the Via Flaminia Minor must have changed following the territorial reorganisation that took place after "colonia Florentia" was founded (reconstructed by Ferdinando Castagnoli). The numbering of the road miles must have also been adapted because the count now started in Florence*".



had clearly realised that the diversion towards Sesto, Calenzano and Val Marina was created during the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. and, that is, after Florence had been founded.

This entire discussion proves that the “milestone” place names are the remains of a diversion created no less than 120-130 years after the construction of the road by Flaminius. Furthermore, Flaminius would never have made the transapennine road longer than necessary by passing through Val Marina, at the time uninhabited and potentially prone to enemy attack, when he could follow the practical and direct Etruscan path from Fiesole to the Futa pass.

## 5 - Alternative routes from Bologna to the Futa pass.

The northern alternative route started right in the urban centre of *Bononia*, near the present-day Piazza della Mercanzia, and it continued along Via S. Stefano, Via Murri and Via Toscana as far as S. Ruffillo. The route was a little to the west of the present-day trunk road. It avoided crossing the Savena and continued along the left bank which, most probably at the time, had enough space for a safe passage below the rugged slopes of Iola. It then continued to coast the left bank of the Savena in a straight line, as does the recently opened new road that almost coincides with the Roman route.

This first stretch described by us does not coincide with the view held mainly by scholars (Calindri, Palmieri) who believe the initial Roman route can be identified along the Via Castiglione - monte Donato - Iola axis. However, this would have involved a steep rise and corresponding descent as far as Rastignano on the Savena, when it was possible to reach the same point without changing altitude and only slightly

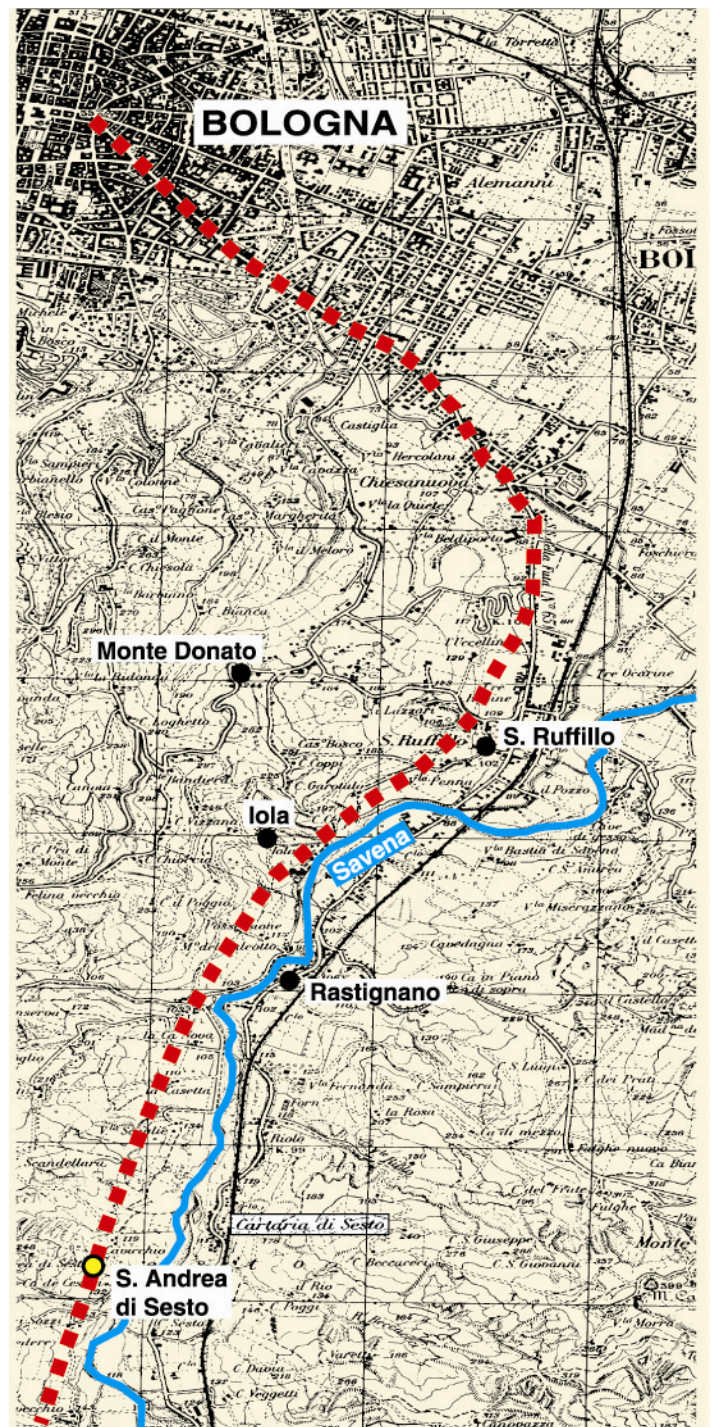


Plate 41

■ ■ ■ The probable route of the Roman road from Bologna to Rastignano during the Imperial era.

<sup>15</sup> Consider that the straight route is the shortest and most practical and on the same level; if a route is straight but features considerable differences in level, the “virtual” distance must also be considered, that is the extra effort required to climb the gradients. We think this route was used during a later age, when a probable shift to the left of the bed of the Savena eroded the base of the slopes of Iola, destroying the ancient road and preventing reconstruction due to a lack of available space. Only after this event, to avoid crossing the Savena, the route from mount Donato and Iola was preferred.



lengthening the route<sup>15</sup>.

The road then passed near S. Andrea di Sesto<sup>16</sup>, and then the present-day farmhouses called “Octò” di sotto and “Octò” di sopra and another building called “Villa None” on a ridge suspended above the course of the Savena. Therefore, we share the opinion of Giovanni Uggeri who, in states reference to the itinerary of the transapennine Roman road<sup>17</sup>: “... The intermediate road is the road that exited the city walls of Bononia towards the south-east and climbed up the valley of the river Savena; it is especially interesting because, seeing that it was an official Roman state road, equal to the Faentina, it was also certainly equipped with milestones as indicated by the surviving place names of Sesto (where there is a well-known Roman complex at Fornace, perhaps a mutatio), Otto and Villa Nove near Pianoro. In a 1061 document, it is simply called “strata antiqua”. It used the Futa Pass (altitude: 903), and entered the Mugello valley through Barberino, once called “ad Vicesimum”, because on the twentieth milestone from Florence, reached by crossing the Croci di Calenzano, Val Marina and the well-know sequence of place names which originate from milestones: Settimello, Sesto, Quinto, Quarto and Terzolle”.

Thus far, the place names that originate from milestones indicate the exact route: instead, there are none in the remaining middle-valley sector, which climbed the slopes to the left of the Savena, joining the original ridge road. It is very probable that the roads united at Brento, given its strategic importance and its demographic increase during the imperial age<sup>18</sup>, which would not have been possible without a busy road. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. it is recorded as being a bishop's residence

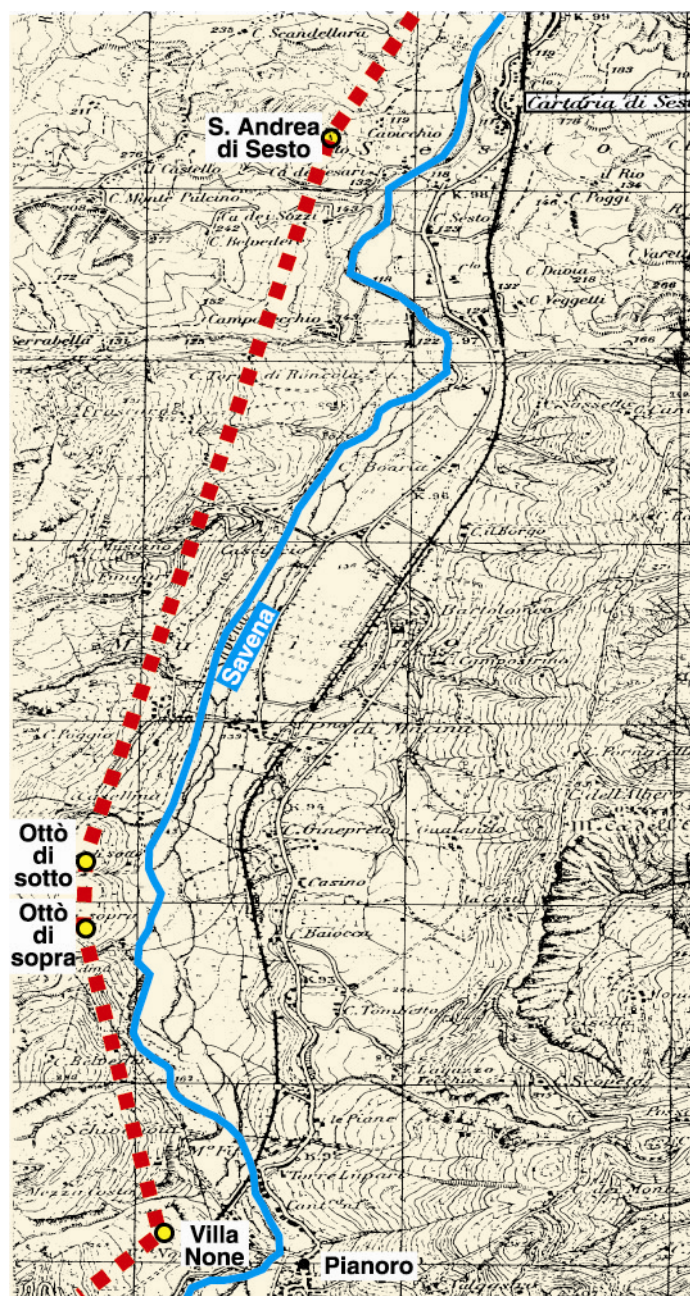


Plate 42

■ ■ ■ The probable route of the Roman road from Rastignano to Pianoro during the Imperial era.

<sup>16</sup> G. L. Monti: “De viis publicis ac militaribus romanorum tempore per agrum bononiensem ductis” page 658. In an essay by Monti, written in Italian in 1828, he upholds that the Roman transapennine road linked Bologna to the Mugello valley along the route indicated by the milestone place names. With regard to “Sesto”, he points out: “It appears that at the start of any road, it was Roman custom to build inns and hotels at the sixth mile, which is perhaps why the name of “Sesto” has tended to be preserved more frequently than any other number... (omissis) therefore it cannot be excluded that the road was ancient and of Roman origin (omissis).”

<sup>17</sup> G. Uggeri: “Viabilità appenninica tra la Regio VII e la Regio VIII (Mugello-Val Marina-Ombone)”; in the Minutes of the Convention “La viabilità tra Bologna e Firenze nel tempo”; published by Costa Editore, Bologna, 1992.

<sup>18</sup> Ludovico Savioli: work cited, page 59: “...In his opinion, Brento, was a city not far from Bononiensi Urbe”.

- Arturo Palmieri: “La montagna bolognese nel Medio Evo”; published by Zanichelli, Bologna 1929, page 322: “Looking at just our region, during the late imperial age, some settlements were very densely populated and of considerable importance, comparable to the city of Bologna, whereas now only their names remain: Claterna and Brento were among these”.



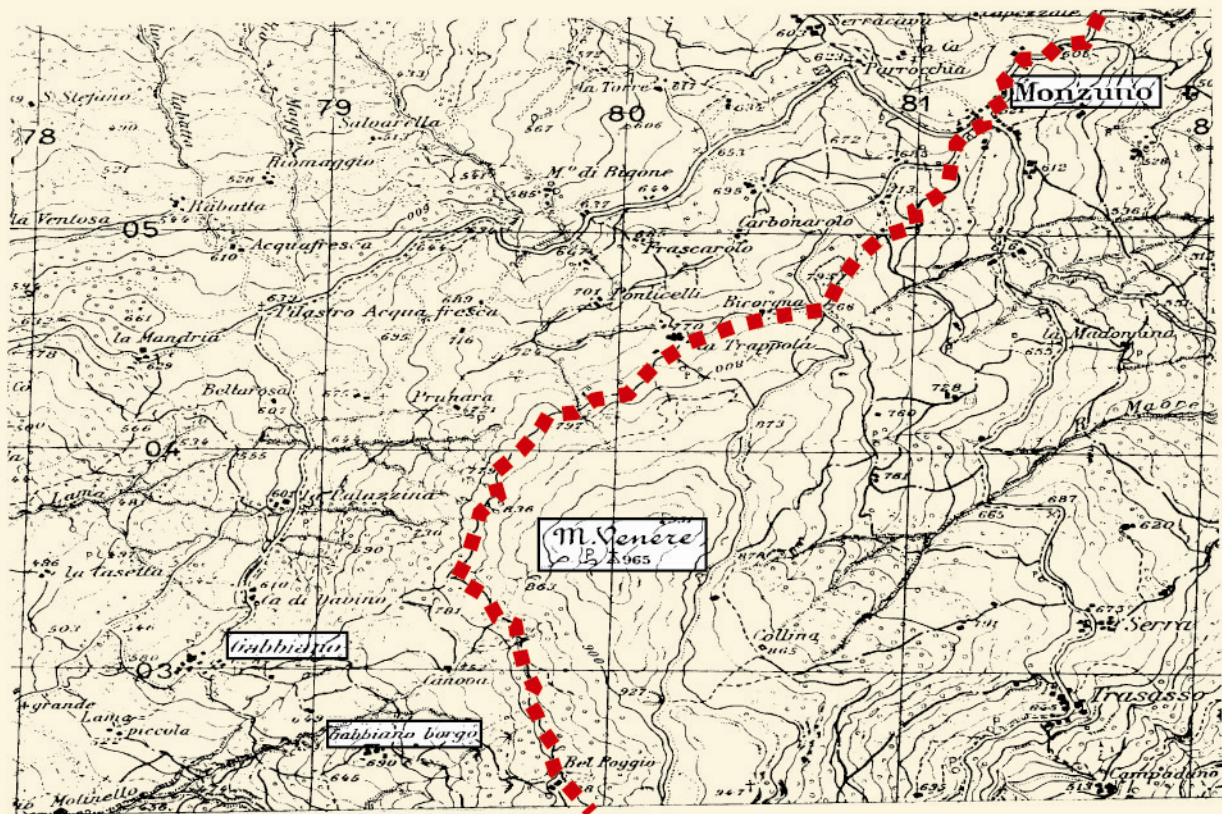


Plate 43

■ ■ ■ Probable Roman route also during the Imperial era.

A document from 793 mentions the passage of the Roman road, (also called the Clodia at the time) from Gabbiano (Gabiano inter elodia et sfrata), located on the western slopes of mount Venere on Bolognese territory (in agro bononiens).  
(Italian Military Geographic Institution (I.G.M.) authorisation No. 5034 dated 13.07.99).

From Brento to Madonna dei Fornelli the route was the same as the original<sup>19</sup>. Then, during the imperial age, we believe that further south, the ridge logic was no longer used to reach the Futa pass. It is probable that a road was created half way down the southwest slopes of mount Bastione, mount Poggiaccio and Poggio Castelluccio for two reasons that depended on environmental factors.

The first could be attributed to a large and deep rock fall over one kilometre wide on the west versant of the ridge between Passeggere and Poggiaccio, which would have buried the road and changed the morphology of the area.

The second may have consisted in the increased difficulties during the winter suffered at high altitudes (over 1,150 metres above sea level) compared to a route that would have maintained an altitude of about 800 metres above sea level. Without doubt, the need for military security that called for the control of these peaks no longer existed.

Thus, from Madonna dei Fornelli (798 metres) when trying to identify the alternative route that reached the Futa pass at a constant altitude, we noted a series of villages, all aligned along a very ancient route, still clearly visible today and older than the birth of Pian del Voglio and Bruscoli:

<sup>19</sup> Confirmation that this stretch of ridge was still used during the late imperial and early medieval ages can be found in a document dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D., examined correctly by Don Antonio Bacci ("Strade romane e medievali nel territorio aretino"; Grafiche Calosci, Cortona, December 1985, page 276). When criticising Manneschi's interpretation, he points out that: "the document transcribed by Muratori, in *"Antiquitates Italicae Medii Aevi"*, volume III, pages 67 and 76, mentions a "Gabiano inter Clodia et Strata" and "inter Claudia et Strata", but this is located in the province of Bologna, somewhat distant I would say from S. Giustino Valdarno. This was the donation of much property belonging to the Roman Patrician, Ophilius to the monastery of S. Giustina in Padua in the year 793; donation confirmed by Pope Gregory IV in 828, as reported also by Manneschi. Among these properties is our "Gabbiano" located in "agro bononiensi", "in comitato bononiensi". Therefore, it is absolutely not possible to use these documents to sustain that the Via Clodia passed through S. Giustino, and, even less so, that this was the name of the route between Chiusi, Arezzo and Fiesole".

The "Gabbiano" in "agro bononiensi" is on the upper eastern slopes of mount Venere, exactly where the Roman road passed which, as is known, was also called Cassia, Clodia or Claudia.



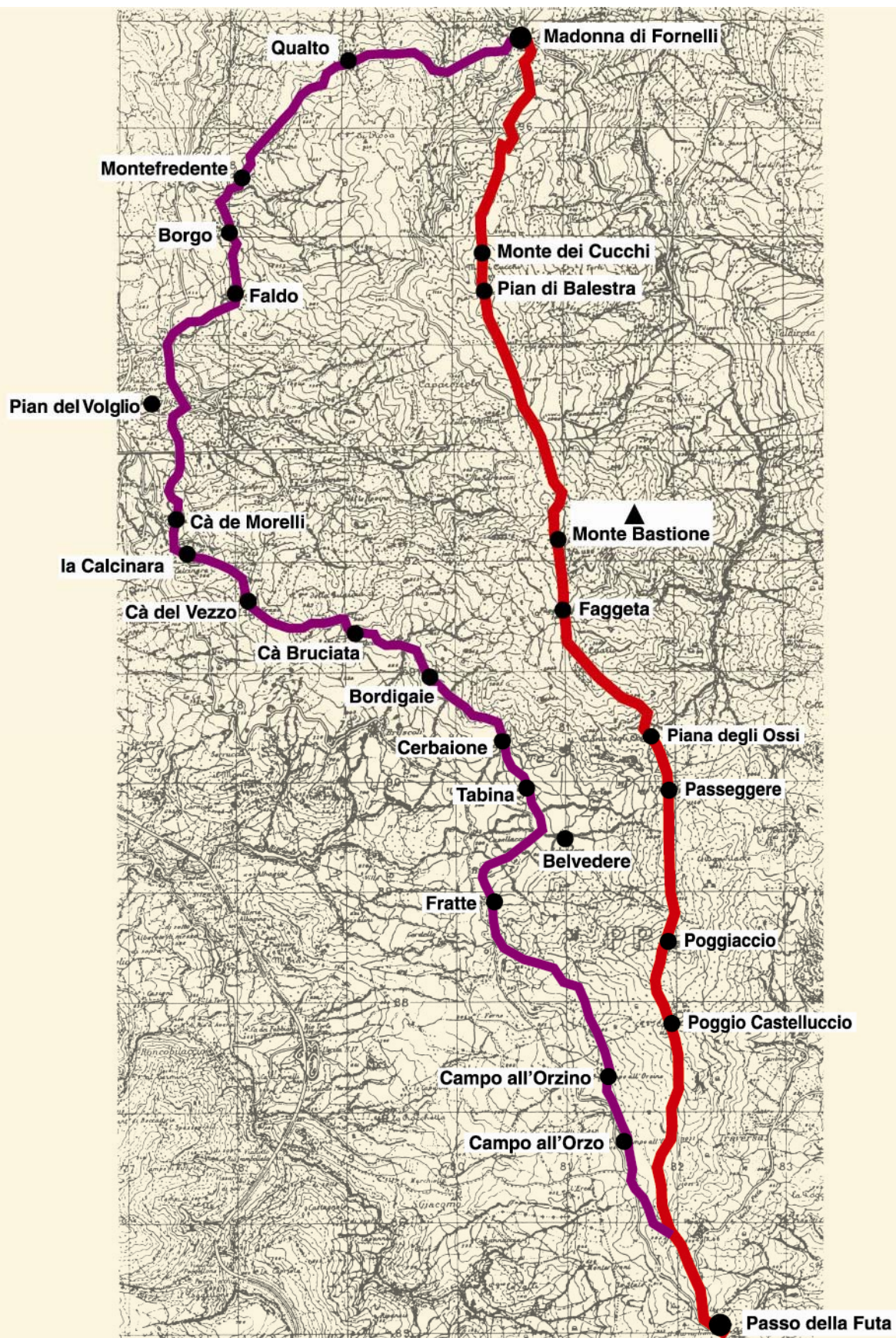


Plate 44

— Route of the road built in 187 B.C.  
— Probable alternative during the Imperial era from the Futa pass to Madonna dei Fornelli.  
 (Italian Military Geographic Institution (I.G.M.) authorisation No. 5034 dated 13.07.99).



Qualto (762 metres), Borgo (761 metres), just above Montefredente <sup>20</sup>, Faldo (725 metres), near the ruins of the old monastery above Pian del Voglio <sup>21</sup>, on the right bank of the torrent with the same name, Cà De Morelli (691 metres), Calcinara (764 metres), Cà del Vezzo (847 metres), Serraccia (844 metres), Cà Bruciata (896 metres), Bordigaie (846 metres), Cerbaione (838 metres), Tabina (807 metres), Belvedere (846 metres), Fratte (811 metres), Campo all'Orzino (920 metres), Campo all'Orzo (914 metres), the Futa pass (903 metres).

This continuity of ancient villages, one after another over a distance of 13-14 kilometres, at an average height of 800-850 metres above sea level, could indicate an alternative route to the Roman road. Hopefully archaeological finds will one day confirm our theory.

## 6 - Alternative routes from Florence to the Futa pass

The southern diversion of the transapennine road started in the urban centre of *Florentia*, then, after leaving the city, it headed towards Rifredi, where it crossed the torrent "Terzolle". Here it took a slight turn towards the right as far as the foot of Panche hill, where it continued northwest in a long straight line, which after passing through Quarto and Quinto, reached Sesto Fiorentino. This initial stretch preserves four place names recognised by every historian as survivors of corresponding Roman milestones, probably placed along the Via Cassia which, as far as Sesto, coincided with the route of the transapennine

road. The place name "Castello" between Quarto and Quinto is interesting and according to E. Repetti, it is of Roman origin <sup>22</sup>:

*"Such a circumstance induces one to believe that this location was called Castello after a receptacle or reservoir (castellum) used to collect water during the Roman imperial age. The water was then distributed into aqueducts that (according to Arcora) perhaps belonged to the aqueducts from Rifredi to Florence".*

On leaving Sesto Fiorentino, the road abandoned the Cassia and headed northwards, across the Settimello, a reminder of the seventh mile from Florence, the torrent Chiosina and the torrent Marinella and La Chiusa, where the torrent Marina also flows. This place name is a reminder of the dam on the torrent that supplied water to the *Florentia* aqueduct. The archaeological map of the province of Florence <sup>23</sup>, mentions the discovery in 1986 of the remains of the inlet to the Roman aqueduct in La Chiusa. Further evidence of its course was found in Querceto and Villa Ginori in Colonnata, near Sesto Fiorentino; also documented in the archaeological map of the province of Florence <sup>24</sup>. Beyond La Chiusa, the road remained on the left bank of the river Marina and climbed up its valley, more or less retracing the present road. Before ascending to Croci di Calenzano, the road passes through Cassiana, which according to Giovanni Uggeri <sup>25</sup>, appears to preserve a reminder of the ancient Via Cassia. This theory is confirmed by the discovery at Croci di Calenzano, of stretches of paved Roman road<sup>26</sup>. The road continued towards the Apennines

<sup>20</sup> Calindri and Palmieri mention this diversion without expressing their opinion.

<sup>21</sup> Giovanni Uggeri: work cited, page 591: "Here the Stale road branched off to the left towards northwest on Pian del Voglio, a considerable settlement in the Roman age".

<sup>22</sup> E. Repetti: work cited, volume I, page 562-563.

<sup>23</sup> File N. 05/20: La Chiusa, panel I.G.M. 106 IV SE section C.T.R. 263110 sheet 1; description: "a deep ploughing brought to light some fragments of concrete that can be attributed to the specus of the Roman aqueduct".

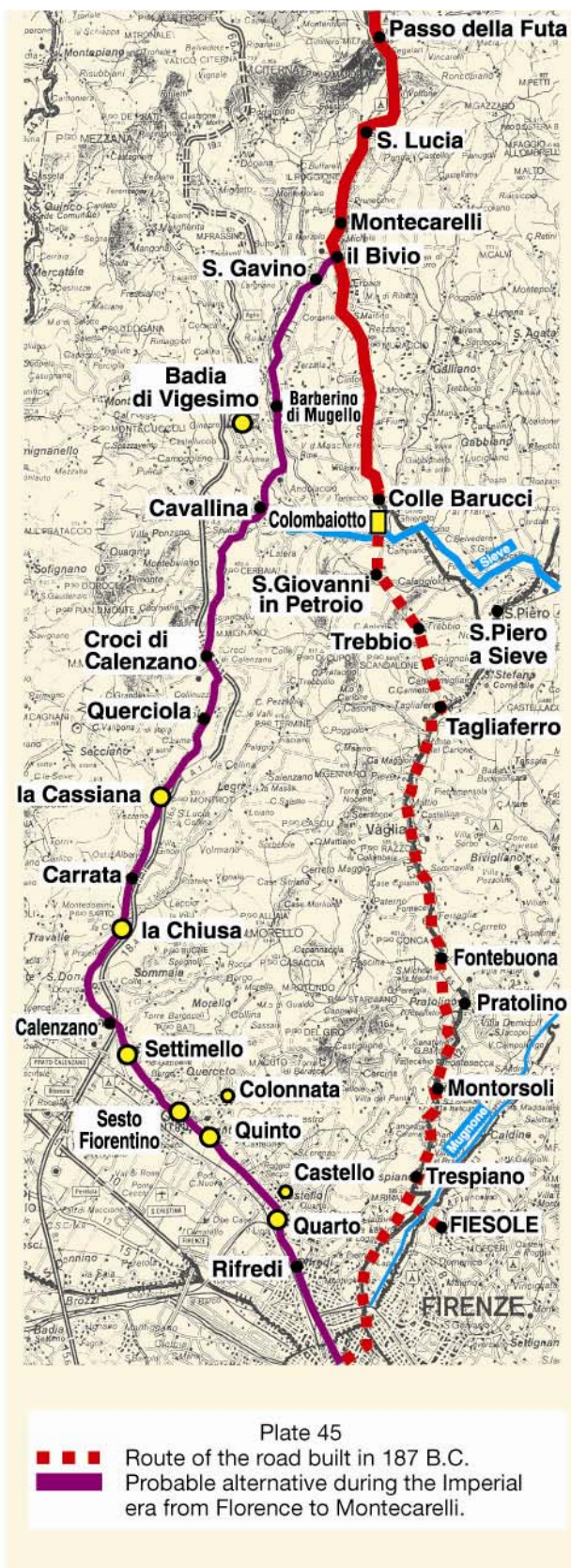
<sup>24</sup> File 43/27: Querceto, panel I.G.M. 106 I SO sheet 2: "As of the second half of the eighteenth century, there are reports of consistent remains of the Roman aqueduct in Querceto. During the course of large-scale agricultural work in 1929, remains of the conduit were discovered. Some stretches of aqueduct were also observed later".

- File 43/51 Villa Ginori: panel I.G.M. 106 I SO sheet 2: "remains of the Roman aqueduct from Val Marina".

<sup>25</sup> Giovanni Uggeri: work cited, page 590: "Especially note Cassiana which could be a normal Roman predial (omissis), but it is more probably a reminder of the ancient Via Cassia (omissis). We know that the name of the Via Cassia in Etruria, and the name of the Via Clodia were also used for the diversions and continuations reaching the Via Aemilia on the other side of the Apennines".

<sup>26</sup> Archaeological map of the Province of Florence - file 02/10: panel I.G.M. II SE sheet 2. Le Croci: "The area includes stretches of paving understood to be the remains of a Roman road system".





where there is a very significant place name: Badia di Vigesimo, proof of the twentieth milestone and recognised unanimously as such by every historian<sup>27</sup>.

After Barberino, the road tended to return to the ridge along the 187 B. C. route and, therefore, very probably it passed through Terzolla, Corzano and Bonicaccio, as far as S. Gavino, substantially more to the east than the present-day roads and with fewer differences in level. One kilometre west of S. Gavino lies Castel Miliari, an ancient fortress whose name preserves the

<sup>27</sup> E. Repetti: work cited, volume I, page 201: “Badia di Vigesimo. Probably named “Vigesimo” after the twentieth milestone along the ancient municipal road which goes from Florence, through the Vernio and Stale Apennines, passing across Giogo delle Croci to Cambiate through Val di Marina, between Monte Morello and Calvana”.

- L. Chini: “Storia del Mugello”; Florence 1875, volume I, chapter IV, page 136: “West of Mugello, in the small valley where the Lora and Stura flow, the first tributaries of the Sieve, there stands a church now called Badia di Vigesimo. This place, named after a pure Roman word which means the “vigesima lapide” or the twentieth milestone from Fiesole or Florence was as famous as Annejano during the fasti in the Mugello of the Roman republic (omissis). Roman armies often travelled along this road and when they reached Vigesimo, they stopped and rested. This is because, according to Zuccagni Orlandini, Vigesimo was not only a military post or stopping point but it was also a large and well-populated town where it was possible to find all types of products and comfortable accommodation. Where it exactly stood is now difficult to determine: nevertheless the most natural and probable fact was that before ascending the steep and tiring Futa pass, the troops stopped here to gather strength; therefore it is probable that this town lay on the low plain between Badia di Vigesimo and the present-day castle of Barberino. Furthermore, it is well known that the road was a branch of the road from Fiesole, Rifredi, Quarto, Quinto, Sesto and Settimello towards Pistoia and Lucca. This leads us to believe that Vigesimo was richer and more densely populated than Annejano, perhaps because it was on a more popular trade route and consequently had a larger income”.

- G. Uggeri: work cited, page 590: “Immediately afterwards, the ancient Badia di Vigesimo or “Canonica S. Marie de Vigesimo” documented by the same tithes mentioned, is further proof of the existence of the twentieth milestone on the Roman road in Barberino”.

<sup>28</sup> Johan Plesner: work cited, page 31: “The name of the ancient Badia di Vigesimo is a more or less exact indication of the location of a Roman milestone. About two miles further north lies “Castel Miliari”, which indicates the next leg of the ascent of the Roman road towards the Futa pass. Near Castel Miliari stands the medieval plebeian church of S. Giovanni Adinari”.



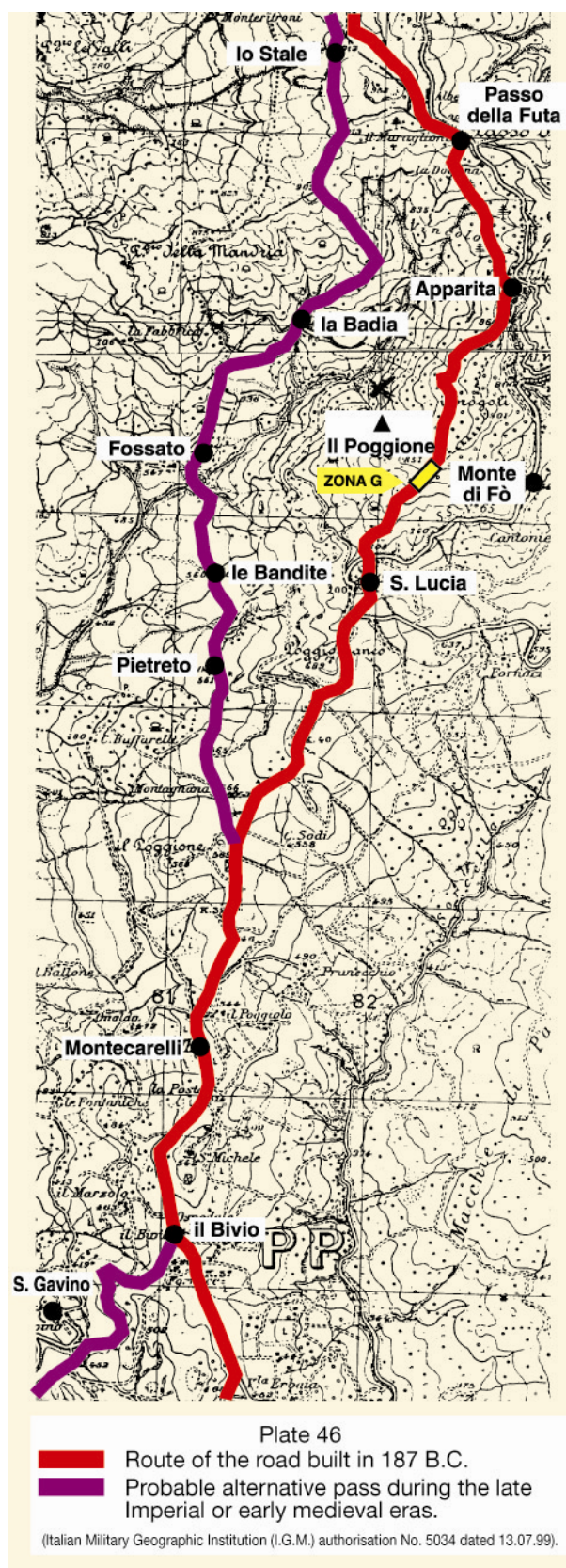
reminder of a milestone<sup>28</sup>. Just after S. Gavino, in present-day Bivio, one kilometre south of Montecarelli, it rejoined the original route of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. road that continued to the Futa pass. This is where the long alternative route that started in the city centre of Florence ended.

## 7 - The alternative route over the pass during the late imperial or upper medieval age.

Before drawing this subject to a close, we would like to suggest one last theory regarding an alternative route of the transapennine road that may date back to the late imperial or early medieval age.

We have already described the sudden break in the paving found uphill of S. Lucia, probably caused by a large-scale landslide, which occurred on the southern slopes of mount Poggione. Therefore it is probable that following this event, the road after Montecarelli no longer continued as far as S. Lucia, but one kilometre before, a mule track was created on the western slopes of mount Poggione which passed through Pietreto, le Bandite, crossed the torrent Stura, almost at its source, reaching Badia di S. Salvatore (also known as the Stale) at 703 metres above sea level. This route would also explain the construction in 1048, of a hospice to “*accommodate travellers before hotels existed in cities, let alone in open country and on the most inhospitable mountains of the Apennines*”<sup>29</sup>. From here, the mule track climbed up to the Stale, at 913 metres above sea level, just a few hundred metres from the Futa pass, from where it probably continued towards Bologna using the alternative Pian del Voglio - Qualto route, described in paragraph four of this chapter.

From the Stale, it was possible to reach the Raticosa pass maintaining a constant altitude and passing through the present-day La Traversa, Covigliaio and Pietramala. From Raticosa, it was possible to take either of two important roads: one towards Romagna, through Piancaldoli, and the other northwards along the ridge where Monghidoro and Loiano were established.



<sup>29</sup> E. Repetti: work cited, page 364.